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DE RUEHKU #2235/01 1631257
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 121257Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5097
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 1644
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0918
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0253
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 002235

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FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2016

TAGS: PHUM ELAB XD XF

SUBJECT: (C) LABOR MINISTRY GIVES APPROVAL FOR UN-SPONSORED
LABOR CONFERENCE IN KUWAIT

REF: A. KUWAIT 1096

¶B. KUWAIT 1095

¶C. KUWAIT 305

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Matthew H. Tueller for reasons 1.4(b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) Mohammad Al-Nassery, IOM Chief of Mission in Kuwait, informed the labor-sending countries' labor officers in a June 10 meeting that the GOK has provided written approval of an international labor conference to be sponsored by the UN and held in Kuwait at the end of 2006. (Note: Post initiated this working group in January, and has been instrumental in encouraging the group to continue meeting approximately every six weeks since then. End Note.) Al-Nassery predicted that negotiations might delay the conference until March or April of 2007. The primary goal of the conference is to agree on a declaration of principles and humanitarian standards to which the participating countries can be held.

¶2. (C) The conference will bring together the GCC member states and the ten countries that send the most laborers to the Gulf to discuss the mutual rights and responsibilities of the sending and receiving countries. The UN is still working on determining which ten countries send the most laborers to the GCC countries, but will likely invite: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Egypt, and Iran. Other possible invitees include Afghanistan and Nepal.

Early discussions of the conference suggested Jordan might be invited to share the positive steps it has taken to fight labor exploitation, but the international organizations have decided this would be too threatening to the Gulf countries. Al-Nassery said the international organizations are counting on Kuwait to help insure the participation of the other GCC countries. The conference -- or "forum," which a Kuwait-based UNDP staffer said will be the official way of referring to the event -- will include participation by a number of international organizations, including UNDP, UNHCR, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), ILO, and IOM. The UN hopes to have ministerial-level participation.

¶3. (C) The conference has been approved, but the agenda and specifics are still under discussion. The UNDP and IOM representatives have requested that no/no public comments about the conference be made, since this is a very sensitive topic and the GOK could still cancel the conference. The UNDP provided an initial concept paper to Post, whose contents are below:

Begin text:

Third Draft
Concept Paper
The Interregional Forum on Expatriate Labour: Mutual Rights
Scheduled to be held: late November or early December 2006 in
Kuwait

Objectives of the Forum:

¶1. Endorse a set of basic principles in a "Kuwait Declaration" to guide the countries sending and receiving expatriate labour to respect the rights of one another and to identify the mutual rights and shared responsibilities of the stakeholders (governments, labourers, employers, recruiting agencies, civil society and the media).

¶2. Raise awareness of the mutual rights and shared responsibilities of stakeholders.

¶3. Enhance the understanding of sending and receiving countries of each other on issues related to expatriate labour.

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¶4. Draw on the lessons learnt from previous practices and from the conferences and fora held by United Nations Organizations and other international organizations and promote better understanding of international standards.

¶5. Encourage mutual cooperation between countries sending and receiving expatriate labour through activating bilateral, multilateral and regional agreements and to encourage the use of agreements and memoranda of understanding that respond to current issues faced by expatriate labour. Moreover, to facilitate information and experience sharing.

¶6. The role of the United Nations Country Team in Kuwait is to support the State and people of Kuwait in adopting a pioneering role in the field of expatriate labour on an international and regional level (among sending and receiving countries) in line with the values of Kuwaiti society, its democracy as well as its active and path-breaking history in the development field.

Participation:

The objectives of this Forum can only be realized with the representation of all the main stakeholders in the delegations of the participating countries.

Hosting Country: Kuwait

Participating Countries:

 Sending Countries: United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Qatar.

 Receiving Countries: Indonesia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Egypt and India.

Composition of the delegations from receiving countries:

Government Representation:

 Minister of Labour

 Minister of Interior or a high level official from the Ministry of Interior

Non-Governmental Representation:
Labour Organization
Recruiting Agencies

4 Countries, 4 people from each country -- Total of 20 people

Composition of the delegations from sending countries:

Government Representation:
Ministry of Labour

Non-Governmental Representation:
Relevant civil society organizations

6 Countries, 3 people from each country - Total of 18 people

In addition to the aforementioned participants, the Forum will have representatives from international and regional organization and several UN agencies (United Nations Development Fund for Women, International Labour Organisation, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and International Organisation for Migration.

The country hosting might invite representatives from countries with best practices in this issue from the Arab region and elsewhere.

Budget and Contributions from Participating entities:

In process of:
-- Establishing the budget

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-- Identifying the contributions of participants, including:
-- Government of Kuwait represented by The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
-- UN Agencies

Agenda:

Duration of the Forum: 2 days - The Forum will be organized into plenary and working group sessions.

In process of:
-- Formulating the programme of the Forum
-- Identifying the substance and number of papers to be presented and/or discussed

Every GCC Country is requested to submit a working paper reviewing the mechanisms used by the Ministries of Labour with expatriate labour and the current provision of legal protection to those groups.

Other countries are requested to submit a working paper reviewing their progress in expatriate labour protection programs.

UN agencies are to review projects that have been taken on to protect expatriate labour.

End text.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

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